

Rebuilding Democracy:

Proportional Representation and Alberta Politics

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The 1989 Alberta Provincial Election saw, for the first time since 1971, a majority government elected without the support of the majority of the voting electorate. The Progressive Conservatives under Don Getty garnered 59 of the province's 83 seats, but only earned 44% of the popular vote. The cause of this result was the structure of Alberta's electoral laws. Albertans have chosen to adopt a "first-past-the-post" style of distributing electoral seats. It may be time to examine if that method of distribution is serving the best interests of Albertans. It may be time to begin flirting with other electoral options. Many political systems around the globe have chosen to adopt a form of Proportional Representation (PR) to allocate their legislative seats. By juxtaposing the current system and PR, it may be found that moving toward the principle of PR would better serve democracy in Alberta. Of course, PR is not without its own weaknesses, therefore it will be necessary to compare the two systems to decide which is more appropriate for Albertans' electoral needs.

PR is not a single, easily defined vote counting mechanism. It is a principle of electoral representation that underlies and binds together a series of specific electoral reform proposals. Every PR system adopts the principle that candidates and/or parties should receive "a number of seats proportional to the votes cast for them." (Lakeman, 1982; ix) In other words, if a party receives 30% of the vote, it also should receive 30% of the seats.

While perfect, or pure, PR is not possible, the various PR systems attempt to come as close to pure PR as is practicable.

The trade-offs for more equitable seat distribution are a possible proliferation of small parties, coalition governments, and a possible reduction in personal contact to the voter.

The qualities of Alberta's "first-past-the-post" electoral system, more accurately called a single member plurality system, are well known. Essentially, the candidate that receives the highest plurality in a constituency wins that constituency's only seat. The party with the majority of seats, not the most votes, wins government. This has over time created many distortions. Some recent examples are the 1990 Ontario election where the NDP received a substantial majority despite winning only 36% of the vote and the 1986 Saskatchewan election where the Conservatives won a majority government although they received fewer votes than their rival the NDP.

The single member plurality system unfairly disadvantages smaller parties, inequitably rewards the largest party and underutilizes large block of votes through wasted small party votes and excessive majorities. These qualities of the system would not be denied even by supporters of single member plurality. "Nobody can deny the validity of the cries 'unfair', 'foul' or 'antiquated' increasingly levelled at [the single member plurality] electoral system." (Hain, 1986; 1)

Defenders of single member plurality would respond that despite its obvious weaknesses, it is the system most capable of creating stable government and encouraging effective representation. A switch to PR may alleviate some inequities in

the system, but at the cost of responsive government. (Maude & Szemerey, 1982)

To return to the Alberta political scene, the amount of inequity inherent within the current electoral system can be displayed by calculating the number of seats each party should have received if seats were distributed in perfect proportion to the number of votes. This is done in Table 1.

Table I: 1989 Election Results, Actual and Under PR

PARTY	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE	SEATS ACTUAL	SEATS UNDER PR
Conservatives	44.3	59	37
Liberals	28.7	8	24
New Democrats	26.3	16	22
Others	0.6	0	0

As can be seen by comparing the actual results from the perfectly proportioned results, the Alberta Legislature should be, if fairness were the only criterion, substantially altered. The government would not have a majority of the seats and therefore a coalition probably would be necessary. The Liberals would become the second largest party and would earn more influence and a higher profile along with the title of "Official Opposition". The New Democrats would be relegated to third and would most likely hold the balance of power. The ensuing effects upon the qualitative

aspects of Alberta politics are obvious and striking in their impact.

'But wait', someone may cry at this point. 'You are comparing Alberta's electoral system with the ideal of proportionality. This is not a fair comparison.' That point is well taken. No system of PR put in practice meets the perfect ideal of proportionality. Politics is far too complicated and multi-dimensional for such simple perfection.

Therefore, Table 2 compares Alberta's current system to a form of PR that is commonly used in nations around the world. The form chosen is the d'Hondt calculation procedure with regionally-based ridings of 5 or 6 members each. Please see Appendix "A" for a detailed description of the d'Hondt procedure and for the justification for using d'Hondt.

As the Table shows, the Conservatives lose their majority, but barely. Again, the Liberals become the second largest party; a result reflecting their second place vote totals. The NDP once again becomes the third party. The regional breakdown of the results also demonstrates that the d'Hondt calculation is more sensitive to the voting wishes of each region, allowing for members of each party to be elected in each region. Under the current system, each party is shut out or substantially under-represented in certain regions of the province.

The results laid out in Table 2 effectively demonstrate the differing qualities, both positive and negative, of the two

Table II: 1989 Election Results and D'Hondt Calculation

RIDING	NUMBER OF SEATS					
	ACTUAL			D'HONDT		
	PC	LIB	NDP	PC	LIB	NDP
EDMONTON:						
NORTH	0	1	4	1	2	2
WEST	1	1	4	2	2	2
SOUTH	1	2	3	2	2	2
CALGARY:						
WEST	4	2	0	2	3	1
NORTH	3	1	2	3	1	2
SOUTH	6	0	0	3	2	1
SOUTHERN ALBERTA:						
SOUTHEAST	5	0	0	3	1	1
WEST	6	0	0	4	1	1
NORTHEAST	5	0	0	3	1	1
CENTRAL ALBERTA:						
WEST	6	0	0	4	1	1
CENTRAL	4	0	2	3	1	2
NORTH	4	1	0	2	2	1
NORTHERN ALBERTA:						
EAST	4	0	1	3	1	1
NORTHEAST	5	0	0	3	1	1
NORTHWEST	5	0	0	3	1	1
TOTAL:	59	8	16	41	22	20

systems. It is now necessary to determine if the positive qualities of either system outweigh the negatives.

The argument in support of single member plurality rests largely on two major points: the system's ability to create effective representation and local accountability; and the system's ability to create stable, one-party government free from backroom manoeuvring.

The first argument, the effective representation of the voter,

rests on the claim that representation must be "personal", or a dyadic relationship. Representation, it is claimed, occurs most effectively between an individual voter or group of voters and a single MLA. The MLA possesses a commitment to the people of his/her constituency and the constituents have one person they can approach and hold accountable for government decisions.

"The single-member constituency provides for an obvious and direct relationship between the MP and his or her constituents....People know that [they are] represented by one individual, to whom they can go with problems or whom they can seek to persuade." (Hain, 1986, 46)

PR dilutes this personal relationship and therefore undermines the accountability of and direct access to the MLA. If effective representation at the local level is diminished, then effective representation at the legislative level is impossible.

It is admitted immediately that this claim would be true if all systems of PR adopted a province/nation-wide list of candidates, effectively eliminating "constituencies". Only, most PR systems do not use a national list. The most common forms of PR adopt a multi-member constituency system with 5 or 6 members per constituency. Studies show that 5 or 6 member constituencies remain faithful to approximate proportionality (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989) and simultaneously allow characteristics of single-member plurality constituencies to enter the system.

First, as in single-member constituencies, multi-member constituencies give an MLA a geographical region to represent. This allows for the representation of regional issues and interests. The MLA is still elected by the voters of a particular

region and is therefore beholden to their desires. This permits elections to maintain their local flavour.

Second, under multi-member constituencies the voter still possesses a direct relationship to the MLA. They still have someone they can approach to persuade or to seek assistance with a problem. Since the MLA is still responsible for the constituency, they are still available for this form of contact. Having more than one MLA for a region does not place a barrier to personal contact.

Arguably, the multi-member constituency increases effective local representation by providing the voter with 5 or 6 options for contact. It must be remembered that partisanship can often prevent individuals from approaching their MLA. If a voter is, for example, a strong Liberal supporter, he/she may tend to feel that a Conservative MLA is unlikely to share his/her views or may believe his/her problem will be ignored. This blocks effective representation. Multi-member constituencies bring down this barrier by giving the voter an option. The Liberal supporter who feels uncomfortable approaching a Conservative MLA probably will have a Liberal MLA he/she can approach.

Third, and most important, the argument for a necessary dyadic relationship between MLA and voter oversimplifies the role of an MLA. An MLA must answer not only to their constituents, but to a myriad of groups: the party and caucus they belong to; various interest groups; the norms of the Legislature; the bureaucracy; and of course their own personal values and beliefs. Representation is

more than reflection of individual voters.

Political representation is primarily a public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements. What makes it representation is not any single action by any one participant, but the overall structure and functioning of the system (Pitkin, 1967; 221-2).

We cannot and should not diminish the important role of representing constituents, but we also must recognize that democracy involves much more than simple personal representation. Single-member plurality fails to recognize the complex nature of representation. PR, while still not perfect, attempts to address those complexities.

But, a quick-witted reader may take a quick glance at a map of Alberta and notice some difficulties with ridings that are 5 times the size of ridings today, difficulties that undermine effective representation. First, they may point out, that a central principle behind the creation of riding boundaries is the community of interests. The approach to boundary creation was to combine the concern for comparable population with territorial concerns. This implies

that within the bounds of 'comparable population', communities of interest should be contained within a single electoral constituency so that their members would have a fair chance of influencing the outcome of the election. (Royal Commission on Electoral Reform, 1991; 137)

Making ridings so large that they sprawl across portions of Alberta or cross into several city areas undermines the sanctity of the community of interests and therefore undermines effective

representation.

The problem with the phrase "community of interest" is that it is vague and ill-defined. Should a community be those who frequently interact on a social and personal level in the community? Well, if so, ridings should be no larger than a couple of city blocks, a clearly unworkable option. Should a community be those who share a formal political and social commonality? In that case, there would be no need for ridings at all. Many claim community should be linked to economic ties. Not only does this oversimplify social interaction, it brings us no closer to the solution. Two neighbours can possess drastically different economic ties. One could be a businessperson in the oil industry and the other could be a union factory worker at a shoe manufacturer. They do not share the same economic ties or interests, yet they are neighbours.

The concept of community of interests is far too often oversimplified and made too rigid. It is merely an indication that communities (community leagues, towns, native reserves, etc.) should be respected when creating ridings. As long as the larger PR ridings do not cut communities in half, then they will respect "community of interests".

The second problem a wary reader may notice is the sheer size of some PR ridings. One riding in Northern Alberta could easily cover 40% of Alberta's land mass, depending on how the boundary was drawn. That is a lot of land to cover. Surely no human could effectively represent such a daunting riding and at the same time

fulfil the myriad of other responsibilities alluded to earlier? It is agreed it would be no easy task, but no one promised that being an MLA was easy. Still, the task would not be impossible.

First, with the modern technology available today - fax machines, cellular phones, computer networking, teleconferencing, etc. - the arguments claiming that large distances impede representation are becoming less convincing. Much of what had to be done by driving from spot to spot can now be done without moving from a desk.

Still, it is important for an MLA to be available for personal contact. That means occasional face-to-face encounters of some kind with the constituents. It is when this point is reached that it must be remembered that there are 5 or 6 members to represent the riding. Even a nominal level of co-operation between the members would effectively bridge the distances that seem such overwhelming barriers. Between them they could work out a system for ensuring all corners of the riding have regular and effective contact.

Of course, co-operation between MLAs of different parties seems a rather novel concept to most Albertans. It may be novel, but would it be a negative addition to Alberta politics? There is reason to believe that it may be quite a positive development.

Large ridings may cause a few changes in the way representation is delivered in Alberta, but they would not reduce the amount being delivered. Yet, there is more to democracy than representation. Consideration also must be given to democratic

choice. Democracy must offer the voter substantial choices.

Single-member plurality elections place one individual candidate against another for the seat being contested. PR elections place one list of party choices against another for the available seats. Under PR, voters choose between parties rather than between candidates. It is charged that PR threatens democratic choice by disregarding the key elements of voting behaviour in Canada. Lists take away a voter's ability to choose between individual candidates. They must instead pick a political party, regardless of their feeling for the candidates. The key to democracy is to choose an individual to represent your concerns. PR ignores this, and therefore places democratic principles in peril.

Two counterpoints can address this concern. First, a list system called a "Panachage Ballot" has been devised to eliminate the very concern mentioned above.

This system allows a party vote, like most list systems, but also gives a voter the option of casting votes for a designated number of candidates running in his district without regard for party affiliation, thus mixing preferred candidates from one party in with those from other parties. (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989, 25-26)

This system allows a voter to choose between candidates while still maintaining the coherency necessary to ensure approximate proportionality. The solvency of democratic principles is not compromised.

The Panachage Ballot innovation is enough to lay to rest any concern about democratic choice, but the point can be taken a step

further to demonstrate that the concern rests on faulty assumptions of voting behaviour. Voting behaviour is a complicated phenomenon. Voting is a highly individual action that has collective consequences. Those collective consequences distract attention from the individual action, causing analysts and pundits to speak of "the voters". It is not that simple. While the election of Jane Candidate in the riding of Hanna Southwest may appear like "the voters" elected her, in reality they may have voted for something completely distinct from her candidacy.

While we cannot speak of "the voters" as a single entity, we can see "the voters" as a collection of individuals affected by the same stimuli (campaign ads, issues, social and economic environment, etc.). This allows for the classification of their voting motivations. Repeated studies have shown that the major justifications for an individual voting decision are the short-term issues in the election, the personality and ability of the leaders, party affiliation, the central party campaign, media coverage of the campaign, and the candidate (Pammett, 1987; Kavanagh, 1983; Clarke et al., 1980, 1982 & 1984; Butler & Stokes, 1976). While the importance of each variable differs from voter to voter, studies have demonstrated that the leaders, the short term issues and party affiliation most affect the voting decision of the largest number of voters (Butler & Stokes, 1976; Clarke et al, 1984). Common sense would tend to agree with this analysis. It is the leader whom every voter sees on their television and in their newspapers everyday. The leader is the personification of the

party and its principles. The leaders, of course, debate issue positions, making issues an important determinant. Finally, political parties are the central focus of political debate. In the House and in the media, every political debate and every long term cleavage is defined according to how the parties line up (or fail to line up) on the issue.

During the campaign, the candidate at best can only reach a couple thousand voters through personal contact and does not have the long-term and regular contact with voters through the media. Most candidates' literature is heavily influenced by the central campaign. Even the design of signs is controlled by the central campaign. This relegates the candidate, for good or for bad, to a less important role in determining voting behaviour.

Single-member plurality exaggerates the importance of the candidate in elections. Candidates can sway the few hundred votes crucial to win or lose a tight race, but they do not determine the voting choice of most voters. That role is left up to the party, the leader and the issues. That would not change under a party list of candidates under PR. The Panachage Ballot will allow those few hundred voters to pick the candidate they like, and the list will satisfy the voting patterns of the majority of voters.

The statement that voters select an individual to represent them in government is an appropriate description of democracy for an elementary school classroom. Unfortunately, it is far too simplistic and unidimensional to be of any value in the real world of politics. Democracy is much more complicated than the simple

election of an individual. PR goes farther in recognizing the complexities of democracy, and therefore arguably goes farther in satisfying those complexities, making it a stronger tool for elections.

Still many may claim that a list system is less democratic because it places too much control in the hands of party leaders.

"The elector has less say in who is elected than with [single-member plurality]. Real power is placed in the hands of the party leaders and of those who decide which candidates go on the party list and their position on the list." (Maude & Szemerey, 1982; 27)

A poor MLA could remain in the Legislature for decades by currying the favour of the party leadership.

This reservation can be laid to rest easily. There is nothing preventing the parties from selecting their candidates through a nomination meeting. This would be a process almost identical to current candidate selection. The order of the list could be determined by the respective order of finish on the ballot. Democratic procedures within parties will not be dismantled with a change to PR. Individuals will still remain accountable.

It appears through the preceding discussion that the concern over PR's effect on effective representation has been misplaced. A greater failing of PR, though, is its inability to provide stable government for the people. The best interest of the people is not served if a government is perennially required to negotiate and capitulate to keep itself in power. Single member plurality may distort the results of an election, but it does so to guarantee a strong, stable government.

As Table 2 demonstrated, PR would cause an increasing frequency of minority governments. A party would have to receive close to 50% of the vote to receive a majority of seats in the Assembly. As experience around the world has shown, very rarely do parties receive 50% of the vote. It would be safe to assume that minority government would become the norm in Alberta politics if PR were adopted.

What Table 2 did not reveal is the proliferation of small parties. Under a 5 or 6 member constituency, a party could win a seat with as little as 15% of the vote in that riding. A party could be in the Legislature after only receiving 1% or 2% of the province wide vote. This relatively easy access to seats would cause many more parties to arise. The current system bears no fruit for a minor party. They expend money and energy and end up shut out of the Legislature and without voice. Alberta ends with its present 2 1/2 party system. PR on the other hand breeds small parties. Their small but significant presence in the House can upset many parliamentary traditions.

Quickly presented, a PR-style Legislature in Alberta would work in something of a constant state of potential collapse. The largest party (or sometimes the second largest party), will search out support for a legislative mandate. This can mean an official coalition, like can be seen in Germany between the Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats, or an unofficial agreement of support, as is viewed in Sweden or during the Trudeau government of 1972-74. Either way, the smaller party or parties present in the

House must be approached for support. Their support comes with a price tag. They will demand that certain policies be implemented or that certain proposals be repealed.

In many nations, this method creates relatively stable government for a reasonable duration of time. Many governments have survived under such conditions for years. On the other hand, the agreement could collapse within months, as has occurred frequently in Italy or with the Joe Clark regime. The stability of the coalition depends on the sense of responsibility among the partners. Yet politics being what it is, any time a partner will see some electoral advantage in bringing down the government, they will not hesitate, no matter how responsible they wish to be.

The crux of the reservation is that minority governments are by nature instable beasts. Even if they survive for an extensive period, they constantly live under a dark cloud of uncertainty. The rug could be pulled out from under the government at any moment, unless they appease smaller partners.

PR encourages unstable government. It practically always produces coalitions with very often only small majorities, where vacillating minority parties or independents hold the balance of power. (Maude & Szemerey, 1982; 29)

This points out the second threat to good government presented by PR. Small parties are given a disproportionate amount of influence over government policy. The proliferation of small parties is not a problem by itself. Even if those parties win seats, there is little concern. A greater range of voting choices and a greater number of voices in the House can only strengthen

democracy. There is nothing to fear in small parties. The concern arises when those parties are given undue access to public policy.

To use an actual example in Canadian politics, the 1972-74 Trudeau government relied on the support of the NDP for survival. Because of their bargaining position as the only party capable of keeping the government afloat, they were able to solicit many concessions from Trudeau. The creation of Petro-Canada, the construction of the Foreign Investment Review Agency, the indexation of tax rates, the Berger Inquiry, the reform of the Elections Act, and many others are all due to the influence of the NDP in this minority government situation (Finlay & Sprague, 1984; 445). Whether these were sound policy decisions is moot. The point is that Trudeau had not campaigned on these issues; the NDP had. These were policies that were actively supported, through votes for the NDP, by only 20% of Canadian voters, yet they became Canadian law to keep Trudeau in power. The NDP received a level of influence out of proportion to its popular support - a situation unsupportable according to the principles of PR.

This example illustrates the distortion that is possible under a PR system. Minorities can take control of the legislative agenda and force reform (or non-reform) on the populace, despite the populace's wishes. Good government is threatened. Democracy is undermined.

Or at least this is how the argument goes.

The 1990 Ontario Provincial election resulted in a majority government, a government completely free to fulfil its agenda.

This agenda meant a new labour law, rent controls, tax reform, possible nationalization of the auto insurance industry, tougher environmental regulations, and so on. Unfortunately, only 36% of Ontario voters supported this agenda. The rest opposed it, or at least the party advocating it. A minority took control of the legislative agenda and forced reforms on the populace, despite the populace's wishes. Good government is threatened. Democracy is undermined.

So, single-member plurality suffers from the same problem as is purported to destroy PR's desirability. But does PR allow minorities to control the legislative agenda? A moment should be taken to address this.

To return momentarily to the 1972 Trudeau example, it must be remembered that only some of an NDP agenda was enacted. Much of the NDP platform was ignored, including an attack on "corporate welfare bums" (one of their main campaign themes in 1972), a more pro-labour approach to economics, or stronger environmental legislation. The Liberals retained the greatest amount of influence over the legislative agenda. In other words, the NDP could only push Trudeau so far. Any compromises agreed upon would have to be at least somewhat acceptable to both parties. It also must be remembered that in any bargaining situation, the advantage is with the stronger partner.

Under PR, the largest partner will most likely have at least a couple of small parties with whom they can negotiate. This will provide greater manoeuvrability for the large party. They can

barter a lower price by pitting each small party against one another. This strengthens the relative bargaining power of the largest party.

Finally, it is necessary to question the alleged inherent difficulties with forcing a government to negotiate to receive a workable majority. This may not necessarily be a bad concept. By forcing the government to consult other parties to receive support, the system is forcing the government to consult with competing interests in society. In Alberta, for example, the current government, even under the d'Hondt calculations, is dominated by rural MLAs. This situation risks the further alienation of the cities from the government. If the current government was forced to negotiate for a majority, they may be required to deal with a party with strong urban representation. This permits an urban perspective to be reintroduced to the government, thereby reducing alienation.

Our current practice of artificial majorities allows the government to ignore minority viewpoints, especially if those viewpoints are not necessary for the government's re-election. A minority situation forces the government to consider alternate viewpoints. In the interests of better government and effective democracy, forced consultation may be a positive development.

There is no complete answer to concerns about the instability of governments under PR. While most examples around the world have demonstrated that premature falling of governments are relatively infrequent affairs, there are never any guarantees. A situation

similar to Italy's current dilemma or the Greek crisis of 1990 and 1991 is always looming in the background.

A partial response may be to reform the guidelines for "non-confidence". The defeat of a single piece of legislation (even a money bill) does not necessarily require that an election is called. Even non-PR nations, such as Great Britain, have recognized this fact. There is clearly a time when a government has lost the ability to govern effectively, and that moment needs to be defined clearly, but the situation need not be as rigid as current practice. A relaxing of non-confidence regulations may go a long way to increasing government stability.

Still, this does not remove the quality of instability from government. Even if Albertans go to the polls more frequently under PR, that does not have to be seen as a negative development. Again it must be remembered that the choice of an election approximately every 4 years is mere tradition. Frequent elections do not undermine democracy, or effective government. In the period between elections, a government possesses a workable coalition, and so the act of governing is fulfilled as well. Government under PR is effective government. It is admittedly less stable, but that does not undermine the effectiveness of the government.

Proportional Representation is not a panacea. It will not correct all the problems with Alberta's government. It will not single-handedly eliminate the high level of voter apathy and cynicism that marks electoral politics in Canada in the 1990s. No one should expect so much from an electoral system. All any

electoral system can promise is to create opportunities. An electoral system can only create a potential for effective government.

The current levels of frustration and cynicism evident among the Albertan electorate is a strong indictment against the current "first-past-the-post" system. Too many people feel that they have been shut out of the process, that their voices are not being heard. The current system places barriers in the way of new ideas. The current system manufactures false majorities in the name of stable government. The unintended consequence of that action is the loss of opportunities for anyone outside the manufactured majority.

In the name of accurate reflection of opinion, Proportional Representation introduces uncertainty and instability to government. Its intended consequence is the offering of opportunities. The voiceless gain a voice. The insulated are exposed to alternatives.

PR is not a perfect system. No one claims that it is. Yet, PR offers the potential for a more responsive and more reflective government in Alberta. The rest is up to Albertans and their representatives.

APPENDIX "A"Explanation of D'Hondt:

D'Hondt is a system of calculating seat allocation that utilizes "highest averages". Using "highest averages", the party that has the highest number of votes receives a seat. Once earning a seat, their vote total is divided by a divisor, which increases as the number of seats earned increases. The d'Hondt system uses successive divisors of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and so on. Other systems choose different divisors. For example St. Lague uses 1, 3, 5, 7 and so on. To elaborate, assume that an election in a riding with 7 seats ends up like this:

Party A: 48.5% Party B: 29.0% Party C: 14.0% Party D: 8.5%

With the largest vote total, A receives the first seat, then its votes are divided by 2 (equaling 24.3%). B then has the largest vote total with 29% and earns the second seat. B's votes are then divided by 2 (14.5%). Party A receives the third seat and subsequently has its original vote divided by 3 (16.2%). The calculations continue until all seats are distributed, as follows (numbers in brackets are seats allocated):

A	B	C	D
48.5(1)	29.0(2)	14.0(6)	8.5
24.3(3)	14.5(5)	7.0	
16.2(4)	9.7		
12.1(7)			

As can be seen, Party D does not receive any seats, and Party C only receives one seat. B earns two seats and A takes four seats.

Justification of System Used in Table 2:

The choice of a "highest average" calculation system, rather than a "quota" system (which is more common) was based upon a desire to eliminate the complicated and controversial problem of "remainders" (seats remain to be allocated, but no party reaches the quota). Neither the "quota" nor the "highest average" system is inherently preferable.

Among highest average systems, d'Hondt was chosen because of its relative conformity with proportionality. Unlike many other calculations, it does not exceedingly favour either larger or smaller parties (for details, see Taagepera & Shugart, 1989).

The decision to adopt a district magnitude (number of seats per riding) of 5 or 6 was based upon the need to compromise between proportionality and riding size. According to Taagepera & Shugart, magnitudes of 5 or 6 maintain approximately the same proportionality as magnitudes of 10 or 12, yet are substantially smaller than ridings with 10 or 12 seats.

Description of D'Hondt Ridings:

The ridings chosen for Table 2 attempted to correspond to respective regions in Alberta. This task was made difficult by the boundaries of existing ridings. Existing boundaries do not conveniently divide into the natural regions of Alberta. For the sake of calculation, the current boundaries and their respective election results had to be respected. There are a few anomalies in the new groupings. For a more accurate regional division of ridings, existing boundaries would need to be ignored. More accurate boundaries could potentially alter the seat allocation formulae. The reader should remain aware of this when examining Table 2.

The grouping of existing ridings into d'Hondt ridings was as follows:

EDMONTON:

Northeast - Belmont, Beverly, Glengarry, Norwood, Highlands
West - Calder, Kingsway, Centre, Glenora, Jasper Place,
Meadowlark
South - Parkallen, Whitemud, Strathcona, Gold Bar, Avonmore,
Millwoods

CALGARY:

West - Northwest, Foothills, Bow, West, Currie, Buffalo
North - McKnight, North Hill, McCall, Mountainview, Forest
Lawn, Montrose
South - Elbow, Millican, Egmont, Glenmore, Shaw, Fish Creek

SOUTHERN ALBERTA:

Southeast - Cypress-Redcliff, Taber-Warner, Little Bow,
Medicine Hat, Bow Valley
West - Lethbridge East, Lethbridge West, Cardston, MacLeod,
Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, Highwood
Northeast - Drumheller, Chinook, Stettler, Three Hills,
Wainwright

CENTRAL ALBERTA:

West - Red Deer North, Red Deer South, Olds-Didsbury, Rocky
Mountain House, Innisfail, Banff-Cochrane
Central - Wetaskiwin-Leduc, Drayton Valley, Stony Plain,
Ponoka-Rimbey, Lacombe, West Yellowhead
North - Sherwood Park, Clover Bar, Redwater-Andrew, St.
Albert, Westlock-Sturgeon

NORTHERN ALBERTA:

East - Vermillion-Viking, Lloydminster, Vegreville, St. Paul,
Camrose
Northeast - Bonnyville, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, Fort McMurray,
Barrhead, Lesser Slave Lake
Northwest - Peace River, Dunvegan, Smoky River, Grand Prairie,
Whitecourt

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